



NEWS RELEASE

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FOUR NEBRASKA BUSINESSES OWNERS RECEIVE 2012 ENTREPRENEUR OF DISTINCTION AWARDS

Four Nebraska business owners who received assistance from Vocational Rehabilitation were recognized today for their success.

The following three business owners received the 2012 Entrepreneur of Distinction award:



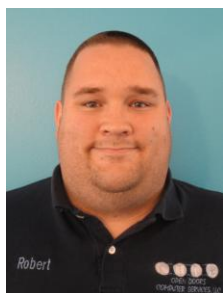
Bryan Bell, owner of Bell Photography in Omaha. From 2010 to 2011, Bell increased his photography project revenues by 850 percent. In addition to teaching photography at a local middle school, Bell is a guest speaker at Nebraska Self Employment workshops, sharing his success story with aspiring entrepreneurs who also have experienced a disability. Bell is a veteran who experienced a disability while in the military.



Jessica Goeden, owner of Healthy Paws in Norfolk. Goeden, who was injured in a 2003 car accident, received assistance from Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation to turn around a struggling pet grooming business. Goeden credits a marketing campaign and a web site for the increase in sales that have made her business profitable. Goeden also helps train other individuals to learn new job skills.



Vicki Newman of Lincoln Family Funeral Care. Newman and her business partner were about to open the business when Newman was diagnosed with Primary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. They did not let that stop them and, with the help of Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation and other state-based resources, they opened for business, generating enough income during the first two months to support the business. In addition to funeral planning, the business provides educational events focused on safety, such as distracted driving awareness, bicycle safety and water safety.



The 2012 Entrepreneur of Distinction Alumni Award was presented to Robert Danner of Open Doors Computer Services in Lincoln. Since Danner received the 2010 Entrepreneur of Distinction Award, his business has continued to thrive despite the difficult economic times. Danner was chosen for the first-ever alumni award in recognition of his continued success as well as his contributions to his community. Danner provides on-the-job training for

Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation clients and speaks at Nebraska Self Employment workshops in Lincoln and Grand Island.

"It is an honor to recognize individuals who have overcome personal challenges to build successful Nebraska businesses," Nebraska Education Commissioner Roger Breed said. "We also recognize you for your willingness to give back your community by assisting others." Breed recognized the work of Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation staff members who work to help individuals return to work, build businesses and live independently in their communities.

"These individuals were able to take an idea for a business, and with the appropriate information and support, make their goal of self employment a reality. Their dedication and persistence is a model for others and the recognition they are receiving is well deserved," Schultz said.

The business owners were selected by the Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in recognition of their entrepreneurial spirit and outstanding business success. Vocational Rehabilitation helps people with disabilities find work and live independently in their communities. Self-employment is one of the options offered clients.

The 2012 Entrepreneur of Distinction awards highlight the successful partnership between Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation and the Abilities Fund. Vocational Rehabilitation offers individualized programs to help people with disabilities find employment consistent with their interests, priorities, strengths, talents and choices. Vocational Rehabilitation is a division of the Nebraska Department of Education.